



Key Elements of Conservation Planning

Natural Resources Conservation Service


Conservation Planning Course

Module 3 Key Elements of Conservation Planning

Objectives

At the end of this module, the participant will be able to:


1. List several key elements of conservation planning.
2. Describe several characteristics of an effective conservation planner.
3. Discuss the importance of salesmanship in the conservation planning process.
4. Differentiate the client's role from the planner's role in conservation planning.
5. Explain how conservation planning serves as both a teaching and a learning process.
6. Discuss the importance of developing long term relationships with clients, and the role progressive planning plays in developing such relationships.
7. Explain the roles of the conservation district and other partners in conservation planning.
8. Explain the differences between a conservation plan, an areawide conservation plan, and a comprehensive plan with a unit of government.
9. Diagram the relationships of the planning steps.



Conservation Planning

Module 3 - Objectives

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Conservation Planning

Module 3 - Objectives cont.

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Pre-Course Reading

1. *National Planning Procedures Handbook*
 - Overview of Conservation Planning - 600.10
 - The Planning Process - 600.11
 - Working with Individuals and Groups - 600.46
2. *Salesmanship*
 - The Art of Communication

Training Aids

Two Flip Charts

Overhead Projector

Method of Instruction

Presentation, Discussion, and Exercise

Total Time

4 Hours

Since there are many items and subitems to cover in this module, the class should have the outline on the following pages in front of them so they don't get lost in the discussion. A copy is included in the Participant Notebook. Ask the participants to pull it out of their notebook and have it in front of them during the discussion of this module.

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Key Elements of Conservation Planning

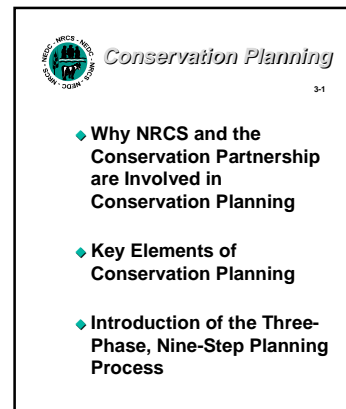
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Introduction

Overhead #3-1

In Module 3 we will be covering Why NRCS and the Conservation Partnership are Involved in Conservation Planning, the Key Elements of Conservation Planning, and a short Introduction to the Three-Phase, Nine-Step Planning Process.

Since there are a number of items to cover during this module, please refer to the outline of the module in your notebook as a guide to track through our discussions. The outline can be found on page 3 and 4 in your notebook in Module 3.

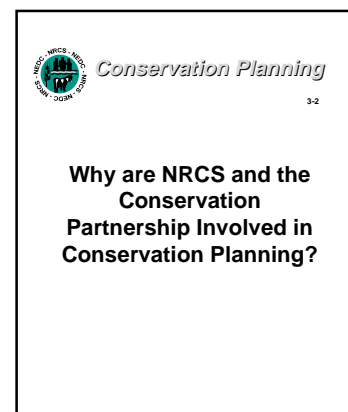


Why NRCS and the Conservation Partnership are Involved in Conservation Planning

Question

Why are NRCS and the Conservation Partnership Involved in Conservation Planning?

Overhead #3-2



Instructor Note

Answers the instructor can use as needed.

- Conservation planning is the foundation for all technical assistance provided.
- The job is much bigger than any single agency or entity can handle.
- Each member of the partnership brings unique talents to the table.
- Each member of the partnership has something to contribute.
- A good partnership is stronger than the sum of its parts.
- Ultimately to get conservation on the ground.

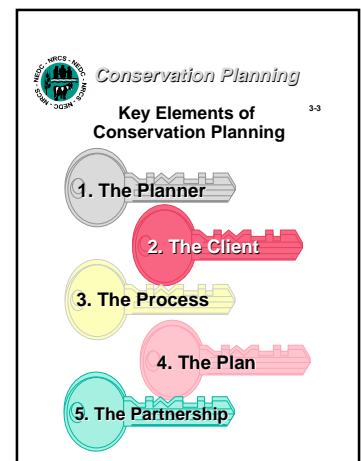


Key Elements of Conservation Planning

There are several very key elements in dealing with conservation planning. They include:

1. The Planner
2. The Client
3. The Process
4. The Plan
5. The Partnership

Overhead #3-3



Under each one of these elements are some very important components. Those components are:

Key Elements of Conservation Planning

Overhead #3-4

1. The Planner

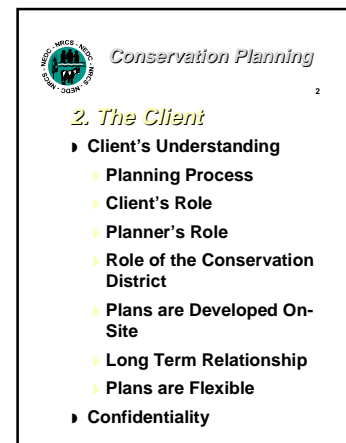
- An Effective Conservation Planner
- Salesmanship
 - Professionalism
 - Client and Community Values and Issues
 - Agricultural Issues
 - Environmental Issues
- Client's Motivation
- Consideration of the Client



Overhead #3-5

2. The Client

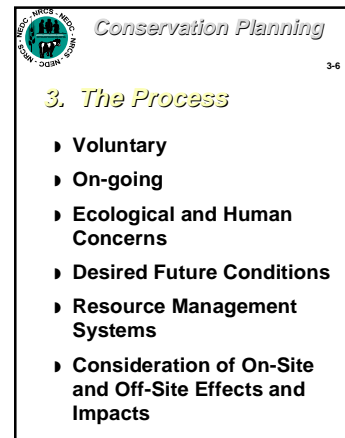
- Client's Understanding
 - Planning Process
 - Client's Role
 - Planner's Role
 - Role of the Conservation District
 - Plans are Developed On-Site
 - Long Term Relationship
 - Plans are Flexible
- Confidentiality



Overhead #3-6

3. The Process

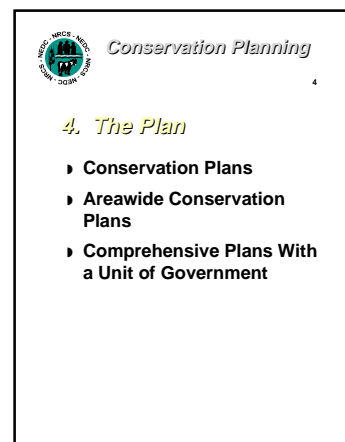
- Voluntary
- On-Going
- Ecological and Human Concerns
- Desired Future Conditions
- Resource Management Systems
- Consideration of On-Site and Off-Site Effects and Impacts



Overhead #3-7

4. The Plan

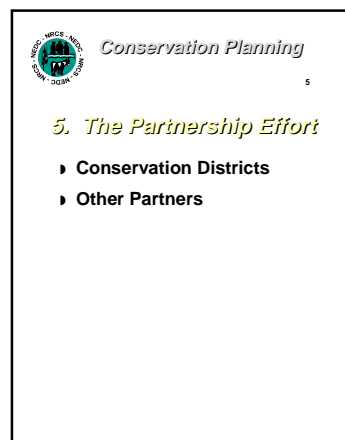
- Conservation Plans
- Areawide Conservation Plans
- Comprehensive Plans With a Unit of Government



Overhead #3-8

5. The Partnership Effort

- Conservation Districts
- Other Partners



We will review each of these key elements and components individually in more detail.

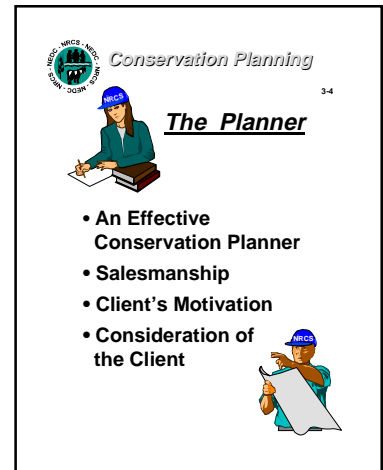
Overhead #3-9

1. The Planner (Key Element)

Let's talk about The Planner as the first key element of conservation planning.

During our discussion we'll talk about four components under the key element, The Planner. They include:

- An Effective Conservation Planner
- Salesmanship
- Client's Motivation
- Consideration of the Client



An Effective Conservation Planner

First let's discuss - An Effective Conservation Planner

An effective conservation planner possesses several important characteristics.

Question

From your perspective and experience, what are some of the characteristics that you feel describe an effective conservation planner?

Instructor Note

List these characteristics on a flip chart as the class responds. The instructor should mention the following characteristics if they are not captured by the class.

Characteristics include:

- Is technically sound (a critically important characteristic)
- Is able to work with people
- Is a good communicator
- Listens to the client
- Knows the planning process
- Uses the planning opportunity as a learning / teaching experience

Instructor Note

After the characteristics are all posted on the flip chart, pick three or four of them randomly, or specifically to steer discussion in a certain direction, and ask why they are important characteristics.

Question

Why is _____ (flip chart item) an important characteristic?

How about _____ (flip chart item)? Why is that important?

Tell me a little more about _____ (flip chart item).

Another thought to keep in mind is that effective conservation planners have to be able to mentally put themselves into the client's frame of mind. The planner needs to understand that farming or ranching is a business and the business needs to produce a profit to survive.

Also the planner has to understand that alternatives that are formulated must be cost effective, culturally compatible with the farming or ranching enterprise, and, if possible, provide additional income.

Sometimes the planner and the client have different goals or concepts in mind for conservation planning. The planner's primary goal might be to protect or improve the environment.....while the client may be driven primarily by the need for sustained profit and to a lesser extent by conservation of the resources. The challenge then is to help the client meet their needs for staying in business while protecting or improving the environment at the same time. This sets up a win / win situation for all parties, especially when the planner can show where the effects and impacts of alternative systems help meet the client's objective for sustained profit as well as conserving the resources.

An effective conservation planner also has the ability to help the client fit the conservation plan into the overall operation of the farm or ranch. If the conservation plan does not fit as a component of the client's overall business or management plan for their operation, it will not be implemented.

Question

Are there other comments or ideas anyone would like to share?

Let's talk a little bit about working with people.

Question

Why is it so important to be able to work with people?

Instructor Note

Let the group answer the question, however, here are some reasons to use if needed.

- People decide if and to what extent they need NRCS.
- People define their problems and opportunities.
- People determine what their objectives are - or the desired future conditions they wish to obtain.
- People make the decisions.
- People carry out the plan.
- People respond, based to a large extent on how they are treated or dealt with.

Question

Why do we need to listen, to the client.....to really listen?

Instructor Note

Let the group answer the question. If needed, here are some reasons to stimulate thought or discussion.

- Listening provides the planner with a wealth of information about the client and their operation.
- The client knows their operation better than anyone else.
- The client knows what initial problems or opportunities they want to deal with and their timeline for action.
- The client is the decisionmaker.
- The client will express their wants, needs, and interests.
- What the client says is important to them.
- Sometimes what the client doesn't say may be as important as what they do say.

Overhead #3-10

Salesmanship

Let's talk about a second component related to The Planner - Salesmanship

This is not a course on salesmanship, but rather a refresher on some of the key aspects of salesmanship.



Question

Why is salesmanship important?

Instructor Note

Items the instructor can use as needed.

- We are a service agency. We have a service to sell, not a product. That service is generally not immediately critical from a time or a business survival factor. Generally the client can decide to use the service now or several years from now. Salesmanship can persuade the client to use the service sooner versus later.
- Our service is based on voluntary participation. People can use our service, or they can choose not to. The client needs to have a reason to use the service and then a reason to ask us specifically for that service.
- Effective salesmanship allows us to be proactive in dealing with a multitude of resource needs, rather than being reactive.
- If a void or vacuum occurs in the service we provide, it will be filled by other means, i.e., consultants, private engineers, agricultural businesses, other agencies, etc.

Question

What specifically are we 'selling'?

- Ourselves
- Our services
- Technical information
- Benefits of Resource Conservation
- Services of our Partnership

The bottom line is that we must be able to sell ourselves, our services, and conservation information if we are going to be successful as conservation planners.

One of the pre-reading assignments for the course was "*The Art of Communication*".

This is an excellent publication, full of sales techniques on how to work with people.

Question

What are some of the sales techniques that you were able to glean from that publication?

Instructor Note

List these on the flip chart as they are mentioned.

Instructor Note

Here are some answers the instructor can use if needed.

- Effective communication - never ask a client a question to which they might give a wrong answer.
- Ask leading questions - let them supply information, which will make them feel important.
- Speak in the client's 'language,' rather than technical jargon.
- Use natural visual aids as teaching and learning tools - grass plants, soils, etc.
- Admit it when you don't know, but make a commitment to find out and get back to them.
- Be enthusiastic.
- Be genuine.

Question

What makes these techniques successful?

Question

What are some sales techniques that you have used that have worked well for you?

Instructor Note

List these on the flip chart.

Question

What are some techniques that you have experienced or observed that did not work very well?

Instructor Note

List these items on the flip chart.

Question

Could these items be improved or used in a different fashion and still work? If so, how?

Instructor Note

Note on the flip chart how they could be improved or used differently.

Question

Are there some specific techniques or items to avoid?

Instructor Note

List these items on a flip chart.

There are several factors important to effective salesmanship that we need to keep in mind. They are:

- Professionalism
- Client and community values and issues
- Agricultural issues
- Environmental issues

Instructor Note

Put these down on the flip chart, under the heading Salesmanship, so they are in front of the group.

Let's spend a few minutes and discuss each one of these factors.

Professionalism

Instructor Note

Put a check mark on the flip chart by professionalism to focus attention.

Question

What is professionalism and why is it important?

How do we demonstrate professionalism?

Are integrity and credibility part of professionalism?

Question

How would you define integrity?

Answer: Soundness of and adherence to moral principle and character; uprightness; honesty.

Question

How would you define credibility?

Answer: Capable of being believed. Worthy of belief or confidence. Trustworthy. Technically competent, for example.

Question

How important are integrity and credibility?

Those two qualities are absolutely vital in professionalism.
“Don't leave home without them.”

Lets touch on ethics in terms of professionalism.

Ethics deal with the rules of conduct recognized in respect to a particular class of human actions or a particular group, culture, etc. As employees we are expected to adhere to the rules of conduct espoused by our employer.

We need to keep in mind that we are professionals and as such need to practice ethics in the highest degree. For example, even if we don't like everything we have to do, professional ethics demand that we not deliver personal opinions in lieu of sound technical advice, or limit the services we can provide because of personal biases.

For a complete discussion on ethics, review the publication titled Practical Ethics For The Federal Employee: Staking Out the High Ground, second edition, by Susan McGuire Smith. This publication deals with a whole gamut of ethics situations and rules. If you don't have a copy of this publication, contact your personnel office and they should be able to obtain a copy for you.

"Appearance" and Labels

Question

How important is appearance?

Question

What about wearing labels?

- Advertising for example, i.e., Monsanto, Joe's Bar and Grill, etc.

Question

How should the planner be dressed?

- Keep in mind who you are going to work with and the situation, and dress accordingly.

Client and Community Values and Issues

Let's now touch on Client and Community Values and Issues

Instructor Note

Put a check mark on the flip chart by this item to focus attention.

Question

What is a community?.....How would you define a community?

Generally we tend to think of communities in terms of space - something we can identify in our mind or on a map. Communities of this nature include a specific neighborhood, a sub-development, a town, or a town and the rural area surrounding it, or an area encompassed by a school district, etc.

However, there are other communities. For example, communities of faith, or ethnic communities, or the global community? And there are others.

Usually, people define a community relative to a set of specific criteria that has meaning to them - these criteria may be in the form of geography, religion, politics, ethnic background, topography, history, economics, standard of living, etc.

Communities do not exist independent of time and space. They are in a constant state of flux or change.

Communities, for the purpose of conservation planning, are most usefully defined relative to a given issue, concern, or problem related to natural resources. An example might be 'poor water quality in Muddy River.'

Also, the more precisely defined the issue, the easier it is to define the community. For example, if the issue is natural resource conservation, then the individuals and groups that may be interested would be huge. Conversely, if the issue is the establishment of upland game bird habitat in one third of a county in the southeastern portion of the state, the community of groups or individuals that may have interest in the issue, or have a well developed set of values concerning it, is much more easily defined.

Question

What is a community value?

Question

What are some examples of community values?

Instructor Note

The instructor can use these answers or others as needed.

- Pride in the appearance of the community.
- Clean water
- Open space

Question

What is a community issue?

Question

What are some examples of a community issue?

Instructor Note

The instructor can use these answers or others as needed.

- Lack of farm labor during the growing season.
- Charting the location of a new highway through the area.
- The need for additional outdoor recreation facilities.

The community values and issues that are important to the conservation planning process are those that are relevant to natural resource conservation for a given undertaking. (See the following example.) This information can be extremely useful during the planning process.

Key Elements of Conservation Planning

Example: A planner has identified that a client is in need of irrigation water management assistance. The client is wasting a great deal of water, which is flowing off-site. This tail-water wastage is resulting in off-site deposition of silt in an adjacent stream, which is contributing to declining fish populations. In addition, pesticides in the tail-water are reducing fish forage, resulting in generally lowered fish populations. The stream is murky, and some algae blooms are already being noted. Fishing in the stream has been a long-standing recreational activity in the surrounding area. Local fishermen, environmentalists, the State Department of Natural Resources, the USFWS, and the Environmental Protection Agency, as well as various people in the community, are all up in arms about the terrible environmental degradation being caused by the farmer who is not using irrigation water wisely.

Question

Given the above scenario, what kind of community values are immediately recognizable and of interest?

Instructor Note

The instructor can use these answers or others as needed.

Probably:

- fishing
- aesthetics
- water quantity and quality concerns
- environmental concerns in general

These are a 'first cut' of issues and concerns that a planner could use to determine what kind of community values were of concern, and should be addressed during planning.

Other community issues and concerns that might not have a direct relationship might be crime, unemployment, the school lunch program, and low income housing. These are important issues and concerns for the community but wouldn't be addressed during the planning process.

Agricultural Issues

A third aspect of salesmanship deals with agricultural issues

Instructor Note

Put a check mark on the flip chart by this item to focus attention.

Question

What are some agricultural issues that we need to be aware of?

- Grain and livestock prices
- Factors affecting production - crop diseases, insect infestations
- Farm Bill Legislation
- Economics
- Rental rates
- Production trends

Economics

Let's touch on one of these, economics, from a sales perspective.

Economics plays a huge role in decisionmaking and will be covered in more detail in the next module.

Economic considerations have to be adequately addressed during conservation planning if the planner is going to sell resource management system alternatives to the client. These considerations should include:

- Cost effectiveness
- Flexibility to allow response to market changes
- Profit potential
- Minimal loss of land
- Minimized use of labor

If we have not addressed these considerations, then we have not adequately looked at the acceptability and effects of the alternatives being presented to the client.

Environmental Issues

Our last component under salesmanship is environmental issues

Instructor Note

Put a check mark on the flip chart by this item to focus attention.

Our role as planners is to be aware of the various environmental issues the community is concerned or dealing with. On a particular issue we need to know.....

- What the issue is, described as specifically as possible.
- What the community concerns are regarding the issue.
- How individuals and the community are dealing with, or planning to deal with, the issue.
- What related agency or departmental policy and guidelines exist.
- What technical information will help deal with the issue.
- What existing or proposed mandates relate to the issue.
- What other assistance is available to address the issue - within NRCS, from other agencies, from the conservation partnership, etc.

Knowing this information will help you, as the planner, deal with the issue from a base of knowledge, rather than from an emotional perspective.

As planners, we don't have to be advocates or apologists regarding environmental issues. However, we do need to provide complete technical information so the client or the community can make informed decisions.

If there are specific mandates to carry out, we can help develop sound alternatives for the client to consider that meet the requirements of the mandate and the objectives of the client. Ultimately, it is the client's decision on how they will deal with the mandates. In the meantime, we've done our part by laying all the cards on the table for the client to consider.

For additional information on salesmanship and related topics, refer to the series of booklets produced in 1994 by NACD, in cooperation with NASCA and NRCS:

- An Easy-to-Use Workbook for Marketing Conservation Services
- Building Alliances
- Conflict Management
- Leadership Identification and Group Dynamics
- Reaching Out to Minority Farmers
- Information Gathering Techniques
- Media Relations

Instructor Note

The instructor should have a set of these booklets to display to the class.

Key Elements of Conservation Planning

Training courses and books are other methods of obtaining additional knowledge and skills on salesmanship.

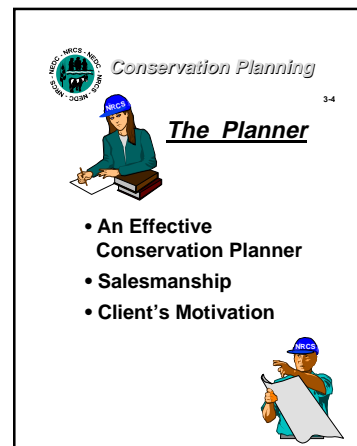
Instructor Note

Show any courses or books your state recommends.

Overhead #3-11

Client's Motivation

Let's talk about a third component related to the planner - Client's Motivation



Question

Why is it important to understand what motivates the client?

Question

What are some specific factors that may be motivating a client?

Instructor Note

Answers the instructor can use as needed.

- The desire for success
- Profit
- Family values
- Family or business goals
- Cultural norms
- Community norms
- Peer pressure
- Legislation

Question

What are some de-motivating factors that may exist?

Instructor Note

Answers the instructor can use as needed.

- Mandates
- Costs
- Lack of time
- Insufficient information
- Fear of failure

As planners we can build on the factors that motivate the client, and help him overcome the others. For instance, if the client has a fear of failure in operating a proposed manure management system, the planner can help the client develop a complete operation and maintenance plan for the system, and help arrange for additional technical assistance during the first year of operation. Another possibility is to refer the client to another producer who is using the system successfully. This will also help meet the client's overall desire for achieving success in their business.

Consideration of the Client

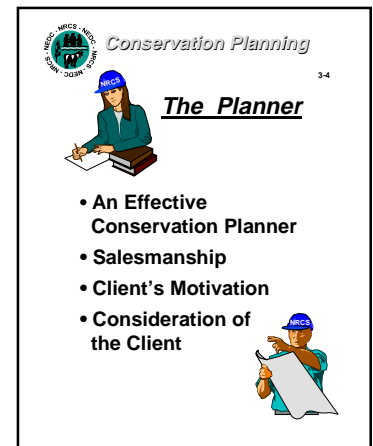
And finally, let's discuss a fourth component related to The Planner - Consideration of the Client.

NRCS planners need to constantly be considerate of the client and their property.

We are guests on the client's property, thus we need to be exemplary guests.

It is a privilege to be on the client's property, not a right. We are there at their invitation.

Overhead #3-12



Question

What are some considerations or courtesies that we need to extend to the client, their family, and their property?

Instructor Note

Here are some items for the instructor to use as needed.

- Keeping the client informed when we will be on the land.
- Leaving the gates as they were found.
- Taking all of our trash with us.
- Driving cautiously and with discretion as to where.
- Showing respect for private property rights.
- Showing respect for various cultural factors.
- Walking the land, as appropriate, as opposed to driving.

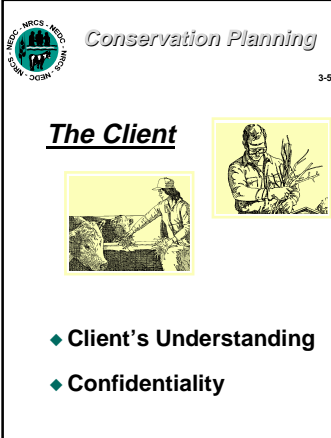
2. The Client (Key Element)

There are two components that will be discussed under this key element.

They are:

- Client's Understanding
- Confidentiality

Overhead #3-13



The overhead slide is titled "Conservation Planning" in the top right corner, with a small circular logo on the left. Below the title, the slide is numbered "3-5". The main title of the slide is "The Client", which is underlined. Below this title, there are two small illustrations: one on the left shows a person in a hat and field gear, and one on the right shows a person in a field setting. At the bottom of the slide, there is a list of two items, each preceded by a diamond symbol: "Client's Understanding" and "Confidentiality".

Client's Understanding

Let's cover the Client's Understanding first.

It is important for the client to understand several aspects relating to conservation planning.

They include:

Overhead #3-14

Client's Understanding

- The Planning Process
- The Client's Role
- The Planner's Role
- Role of the Conservation District
- Plans are developed On-Site
- Long-Term Relationship
- Plans are Flexible



Let's cover each of these in more detail.

Planning Process

First, The Planning Process

Question

Why do we use a planning process?

Instructor Note

Answers the instructor could use.

- To be efficient and effective in working with the client.
- To have a consistent method of assisting clients.

From the client's perspective, relative to the planning process, the client needs to know basically four things.....

- Where are they now?
- Where do they want to be at some point in the future?
- How can they get there?
- How can they measure change?

That is the planning process, in layman's terms, that the client needs to understand. It is not necessary to explain in detail the planning process steps or phases.

It is important for them to know that we will guide them through a process of addressing

- Where they are now.
- Where they want to be.
- How they can get there.
- How they can measure change.....

.....and as we guide them through the process, we will help them achieve the following.....

- Inventory and analyze their resources.
- Identify problems, concerns, and opportunities, and their objectives.
- Develop and consider alternatives for making decisions.
- Implement their plan and evaluate progress.

Client's Role

Next, let's discuss the Client's Role

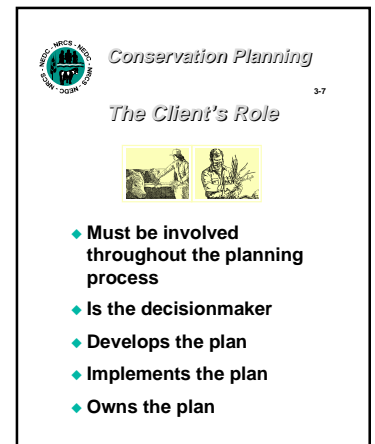
Instructor Note

Leave the following overhead up during the discussion of these items

The Client's Role

Overhead #3-15

- Must be involved throughout the planning process
- Is the decisionmaker
- Develops the plan
- Implements the plan
- Owns the plan



 **Conservation Planning** 3-7

The Client's Role



- ◆ **Must be involved throughout the planning process**
- ◆ **Is the decisionmaker**
- ◆ **Develops the plan**
- ◆ **Implements the plan**
- ◆ **Owns the plan**

Let's touch on each one of these items.

Client Involvement in the Planning Process

Question

Why must the client be involved throughout the planning process?

Instructor Note

Answers for the instructor to use as needed.

- This is a critical item. We plan with them, not for them.
- The client and planner need to work together as a team.
- The client knows their situation better than anyone else.
- The client's knowledge and expertise is needed throughout the planning process.

The client is the decisionmaker

- We provide technical information; resource information; analysis; alternatives; suggestions; projections; encouragement; pros and cons; etc., however, the bottom line is the client is the decisionmaker.

The client develops the plan

- We provide planning assistance, however, the client develops the plan.

The client implements the plan

- We provide technical assistance, however, the client implements the plan.
- If the client doesn't implement the plan, who will implement it? **NO ONE!**

The client owns the plan

- It is the client's plan.
- If they feel they don't own it, we've messed up in the planning process.
- If they feel they don't own it, it won't get implemented.
- If they feel they don't own it, and something goes wrong, who are they going to hold responsible?probably the planner, the agency, or the conservation district.
- If they feel they don't own it, and don't implement it, then nothing good happens to the land.

Planner's Role

The next item of discussion is The Planner's Role.

What is the planner's role?

The planner does.....

- Provide technical assistance
- Help guide the planning process
- Help inventory and analyze the resources
- Help develop and analyze resource management system alternatives
- Assist with developing the plan
- Help implement the plan and determine the impacts

The planner does not.....

- Make decisions for the client
- Serve as an agent for the client in dealing with contractors, other agencies, etc.
- Make promises that can't be delivered
- Misrepresent a practice or system

Role of the Conservation District

Next, let's touch on the role of the conservation district

The Conservation District.....

- Is a legal subdivision of state or tribal government
- Is governed by an officially elected or appointed board
- Is the local, grass roots, conservation governing body
- Provides leadership for conservation activities within the district
- Develops the overall resource assessments and priority setting within the district, through a locally led process
- Helps facilitate partnership assistance
- Helps convey legislative needs, both state and national
- Signs a cooperative agreement with the client

Plans are Developed On-Site

Instructor Note

The instructor may want to refer to the "The Art of Communication" publication.


Conservation planning requires the client's and the planner's presence on the land, on-site assistance.

It is necessary to 'walk' the land! This can only be done on-site.

It is necessary to 'read' the land to get a 'feel' for what is or is not happening! This can only be done effectively on-site.

Overhead #3-16

Conservation planning is a teaching/learning process. It is an opportunity to:



Conservation Planning

3-8

Conservation Planning is a teaching / learning process. It is an opportunity to:

- Demonstrate
- Teach
- Observe
- Evaluate
- Learn
- Work together
- Monitor

Demonstrate	→	plant growth; hard pan; overbrowsing
Teach	→	conservation principles; grazing techniques; browse utilization
Observe	→	runoff, erosion, sedimentation, eutrophication, etc.
Evaluate	→	results of current practices and systems
Learn	→	from the client and the application of the plan
Work together	→	in a cooperative effort as a team, since a team is stronger than its individual parts
Monitor	→	resource impacts as the plan is implemented

We will have an opportunity to practice these techniques during the field exercise portion of the course.

Long Term Relationship

It may take weeks, months, or even years in some cases, for the client to develop and decide on a complete, comprehensive conservation plan for their enterprise.

Our role in the meantime is to keep working with the client, in a long term relationship, using the planning process, to incrementally move the client to higher and higher conservation levels in a progressive planning mode.

The rate of progress depends on the client's objectives and ability to make and implement conservation decisions.

Even if the planning process is short and decisions are made quickly on a comprehensive conservation plan, there is still a long term relationship needed as the plan is implemented, evaluated, and adjusted.

Plans are Flexible

Plans need to be flexible, to allow for adjustments in implementation and management, as conditions change, due to weather, prices, family conditions, or other circumstances.

Adaptive management plays a key role in flexibility. It is the process of using monitoring, evaluation, and experimentation to provide information to adjust resource management decisions as needed and to improve the FOTG.

Confidentiality

Planners must use a great deal of common sense and discretion with the information they have gained during their discussions with a client and their observations of the client's unit during the planning process. Generally the client is sharing information that he or she does not expect to be repeated to others. If in doubt, respect the relationship you have with the client and keep the information confidential, or ask the client if he or she minds if you share that particular information with others.

Clients may express concern about the information NRCS stores electronically or in hard copy in relation to their farm or ranch. In other words, they will likely want to know if other individuals or agencies have access to that information and to what extent. It is important for the conservation planner to explain to the client that NRCS has responsibility to both the client and the public.

Process for Requests for Information

Basically, NRCS has a process in place to handle requests for information from a client's file. The individual or agency making the request must put the request in writing and be very specific as to exactly what they are requesting. The request is reviewed by NRCS personnel who are knowledgeable about the laws and regulations governing protection or release of information. NRCS will then make a decision, based on current laws and regulations, as to what can and cannot be released. Only the minimum amount of information that has to be released will actually be released, nothing more.

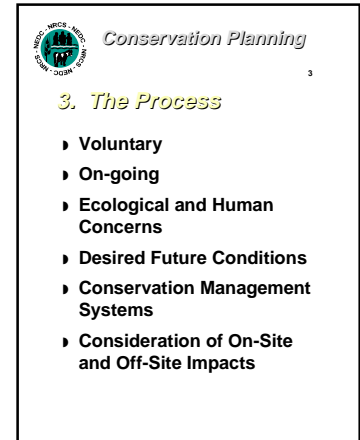
No one outside of NRCS or the conservation district (employees) will be permitted access electronically to client data.

3. The Process (Key Element)

Overhead #3-17

Several important factors relating to the process are:

- Voluntary
- On-Going
- Ecological and Human Concerns
- Desired Future Conditions
- Resource Management Systems
- Consideration of On-Site and Off-Site Impacts



Voluntary

Participation on the part of the client is voluntary. The client decides whether or not to participate in the planning process.....And whether or not to participate in programs.....Ultimately, it is the client's decision.

If the client chooses to participate in certain programs, there are requirements that must be met, however, from an NRCS perspective it is still the client's voluntary decision to participate or not participate.

On-Going

The planning process does not stop with development of the plan document. It continues with implementation and evaluation. It is an ongoing process that may continue for many years.

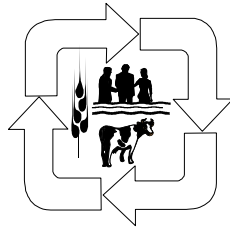
Continued service and follow-up on the part of the planner and others is needed to keep the process going.

Ecological and Human Concerns

Conservation Planning is holistic!

Question

*What does the term **holistic** mean in relation to conservation planning?*



Holistic is dealing with all of the ecological and human considerations, and exploring all of the problems, concerns, and opportunities.

Ecological → Soil, Water, Air, Plants, and Animals

Human → Economic and Social

Question

Why is it important to look at the ecological and human considerations from a holistic sense?

Everything is interconnected.

Hugh Hammond Bennett

Hugh Hammond Bennett looked at conservation planning from a holistic standpoint. According to Bennett, an effective conservation planner must adhere to the following principles:

Overhead #3-18

- Consider the need's and capabilities of each acre within the plan.
- Consider the farmer's facilities, machinery, and economic situation.
- Incorporate the farmer's willingness to try new practices.
- Consider the land's relationship to the entire farm, ranch, or watershed.
- Ensure the planner's presence out on the land with the decisionmaker.



Hugh Hammond Bennett

- Consider the needs and capabilities of each acre within the plan.
- Consider the farmer's facilities, machinery, and economic situation.
- Incorporate the farmer's willingness to try new practices.
- Consider the land's relationship to the entire farm, ranch, or watershed.
- Ensure the conservationist's presence out on the land with the decisionmaker.

Bennett's principles encompass the ecological and human concerns.

Desired Future Conditions

Conservation plans are developed based on reaching the objectives established by the client. The objectives are described in terms of desired future conditions - the ecological, economic, and social conditions the client wants to reach, at some point in the future, defined in quantitative and/or qualitative terms.

It is important to know where we want to go. If we don't know where we are going, then any road will take us there. Desired future conditions tell us where we want to go. The conservation planning process helps a client develop a conservation plan, which then becomes the roadmap to guide the client toward meeting his objectives / desired future conditions, which are a part of the plan.

Resource Management Systems

Plans are developed to balance natural resource issues with social and economic needs through the development of resource management systems (RMS). A resource management system is a combination of conservation practices and resource management for the treatment of all identified resource concerns for soil, water, air, plants, and animals that meets or exceeds the quality criterion in the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) for resource sustainability.

The minimum planning level to reach for, in accordance with conservation planning policy, is sustainability for soil, water, air, plants, and animals.....or a Resource Management System.

This is the **minimum** level to strive for in the planning process. The client may decide (and hopefully will with the guidance of the planner) to develop and implement a conservation plan at a higher level, above sustainability, to improve the resource base.

In developing RMS options, planners should offer several alternatives for the client to consider. Don't limit the use of systems or practices if they are applicable to the situation. Lay all the cards on the table so the client has the benefit of considering all options. For example, don't leave out no-till simply because the client traditionally has used conventional tillage.

Consideration of On-Site and Off-Site Effects and Impacts

It is critical that the planner and the client not only look within the immediate planning unit boundary, but beyond the planning unit, at interrelated geographical areas, during the planning process. Problems may originate or may be partially caused by conditions off-site. Likewise, the off-site effects and impacts, of any proposed treatment on-site, need to be considered.

An **example** of a problem caused by conditions off-site:

A saline seep may be caused by resource conditions and the resource management practiced on a neighbor's land. Treatment of the saline seep may be quite limited on-site. Solving the problem may rest entirely on how the resources are handled on the neighbor's land.

An **example** of off-site effects and impacts of proposed treatment:

Construction of an impoundment and the diversion of water for irrigation purposes on the planning unit, on-site, may seriously effect stream flows, riparian habitat, and wildlife species downstream of the planning unit, or off-site. Consideration of those off-site effects and impacts need to be a part of evaluating proposed treatment alternatives.

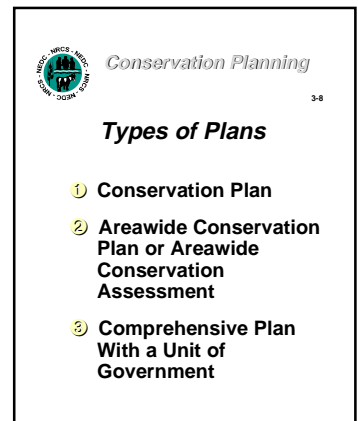
4. The Plan (Key Element)

The plan document is a very key element or portion of the planning process, however, it is not an end in itself. The plan helps get conservation on the ground, thus the planning process does not stop when the client makes decisions, but continues with implementation and evaluation.

Let's discuss the three different types of plans that we are primarily involved with.....

Overhead #3-19

1. Conservation Plan
2. Areawide Conservation Plan
or Areawide Conservation
Assessment
3. Comprehensive Plan With a
Unit of Government



Conservation Plans

Conservation plans are developed with individuals, or with groups where the group acts as an individual and has decisionmaking authority for specific land units. They are voluntary, site-specific, comprehensive, and action oriented. Comprehensive means that a complete job of planning is done whether the planning unit is a field, a series of fields, or the entire unit - utilize the planning process to consider all of the problems and opportunities and look at all of the resources and the human concerns.

Areawide Conservation Plans or Areawide Conservation Assessments

Areawide Conservation Plans are voluntary, comprehensive plans for a watershed or other defined boundary.

Areawide Conservation Plans or Areawide Conservation Assessments may be developed with formal or informal groups. In an informal group, the group is generally the decisionmaker if they have the authority to make decisions and implement the plan. The decisionmaker in a formal group, such as an irrigation district or a watershed district, is generally a board of elected or appointed officials who have responsibility under the law for developing and implementing areawide conservation plans.

Areawide conservation plans are developed when a decisionmaker exists who has the authority to make decisions and implement the plan.

Areawide conservation assessments are developed when an authorized decisionmaker does not exist. In this case the planning process can only be completed through planning step 6, evaluate alternatives.

Broad community involvement is critical in development of areawide conservation plans or assessments. Involvement can include any combination of people or organizations - landowners or operators with agricultural land uses, urban landowners, homeowner organizations, conservation clubs, schools, units of government, or any combination of these or other individuals or organizations. Anyone who has an interest in the outcome of the plan or assessment is a stakeholder and should participate.

Comprehensive Plans With a Unit of Government

Comprehensive plans with a unit of government are developed by a unit of government that has jurisdiction over an area. NRCS primarily provides resource information and related technical data in these instances to the unit of government or to a professional planner. They generally use their own planning process.

5. The Partnership (Key Element)

Conservation Districts

NRCS provides planning assistance through local conservation districts.

- Districts are the basis for the NRCS presence
- Districts are the “license” for NRCS to be there

Conservation districts, which are a subdivision of state government, in cooperation with their constituents, develop the overall resource assessments and set priorities for conservation planning activities in their district, through a locally led process.

- They are the grassroots organization.
- They are the local conservation leaders.
- They have a huge stake in what happens in their community.

Other Partners

Partnerships play a key role in getting the conservation job done by providing:

- Additional staff needs
- Specialized technical assistance
- Implementation programs and funding
- Resource data
- Information and education
- Evaluation tools
- Facilities and equipment

Question

What else do partners have to offer?

- Partners bring additional talents and expertise to the table.
- The strength of a partnership effort is also greater than the sum of its parts.

Partnership Example

There are a number of key partners that help get the conservation job done. An example of one such partner in each state is the state conservation agency. Those agencies, on a state by state basis, help conservation districts, and thus the conservation movement, in a number of ways. They help administer district programs and activities; they help provide guidance for districts to identify and address conservation needs in the state; they provide funding for district operations; they help districts obtain funding from other sources such as grant monies; and they provide a host of other services vital to conservation district operations. Indian Nations that have formed conservation districts under tribal law have a similar governmental entity that provides vital service and support to their districts.

Introduction of the Three-Phase, Nine-Step Planning Process

NRCS uses a three-phase, nine-step planning process. Here's how those three phases and nine steps look from a linear perspective:

Instructor Note

Overheads of these phases and steps.

Overhead #3-20

Phase I - Collection and Analysis

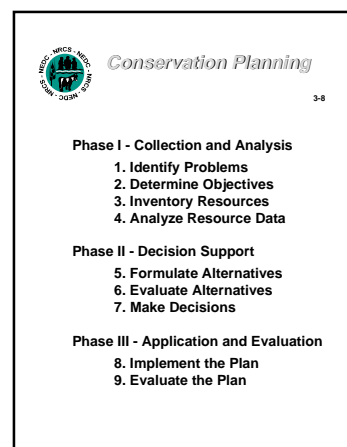
1. Identify Problems
2. Determine Objectives
3. Inventory Resources
4. Analyze Resource Data

Phase II - Decision Support

5. Formulate Alternatives
6. Evaluate Alternatives
7. Make Decisions

Phase III - Application and Evaluation

8. Implement the Plan
9. Evaluate the Plan



The Dynamic Nature of the Planning Process

The planning process is straight forward, but not necessarily linear.

It is a cycling process - repetitive - there is a need to cycle back.

All three phases and all nine steps are vital for successful conservation planning.

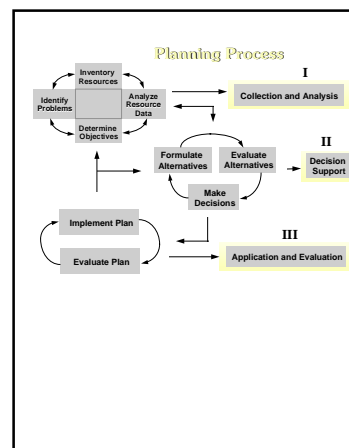
Instructor Note

Use the overhead showing the cycling nature of the planning process as the items below are discussed. The instructor can use a grease pencil to mark key points on the overhead during the discussion. The overhead is also provided in the participant's notebook.

Overhead #3-21

Examples of the Dynamic Nature of Planning Process

- The planning process may start with any of the first three planning steps or planning step nine.
- There may be a need to cycle back to step three (inventory resources), while working on step four (analyze resource data), if more inventory information is needed.



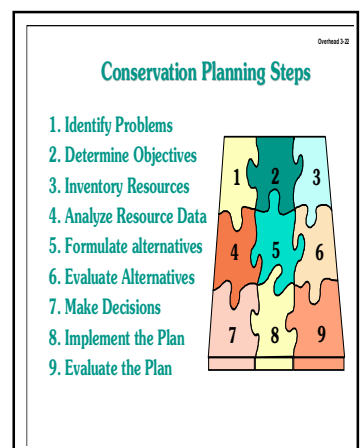
Key Elements of Conservation Planning

- Step one (identify problems) and step two (determine objectives) will not be finalized until step 4 (analyze resource data) is completed. The analysis in step four will, at the very least, require a brief review of problem identification and objective determination to make sure they are okay.
- There may also be a need for the client to revise his objectives as alternatives are formulated and evaluated.
- Once the plan is developed, there may be a need to go back through the entire planning process and revise the plan, if that becomes necessary, as it is being implemented and evaluated. A revision may be necessary due to changes in objectives, size of the unit, livestock numbers, economics, weather, etc.
- Based on the results of implementation, there may be a need to look at additional alternatives if the results of plan implementation are not solving the identified problems or meeting the client's objectives.

Instructor Note

Overhead #3-22

Use an overhead showing the conservation planning steps in the form of a puzzle. Additional points below may be made with the puzzle. The overhead is also provided in the participant's notebook.



Key Elements of Conservation Planning

A copy of the overhead I was just using, and a copy of this one displaying the planning process, in the form of a puzzle are both included in your notebook.

When the planning process is displayed in the form of a puzzle, if any one piece is missing, we don't have a complete picture. All of the pieces are needed for a complete product.

Also keep in mind that puzzles aren't put together in one particular order. By tying that thought to the planning process, any of the first three pieces (identify problems, determine objectives, or inventory resources) or the ninth piece (evaluate the plan) could be placed on the board first.

One scenario to avoid, that is sometimes all too common, is to quickly identify a problem (planning step 1), jump to conclusions (planning step 7) and install a practice (planning step 8).

Question

What are the problems with this scenario?

Instructor Note

Some answers the instructor can use if responses are slow.

- Severely short changes the planning process.
- Haven't adequately identified problems.
- Haven't inventoried or analyzed the resources.
- Haven't determined the client's overall objectives - desired future conditions.
- Haven't adequately determined the effects and impacts on- or off-site.

- Haven't considered all of the resources and the resource concerns.
- Haven't adequately considered economic and social considerations.

Two important things to keep in mind are:

1. All of the steps are included as the planning process is carried out.
2. The planning phases or steps are revisited as often as necessary to develop and implement a quality plan.

Summary

In summary, the planning process is dynamic. As the process unfolds, it needs to be tailored to the client and to the client's unique situation. Every client and every planning situation is different. The process must be flexible. That's why conservation planning is both an art and a science.

Class Exercise

Instructor Note

Divide the class into small groups for a brief class exercise to develop and share an example of how the planning process is used in everyday life.

I am going to divide the class into small groups to complete a short exercise.

These individuals will be group 1, these in group 2,.....etc.

Take 15 minutes to select and describe a real-life scenario where the planning process steps are used with an activity or issue. After you have done that, I'll ask a spokesperson from each group to share the group's thoughts with the entire class.

Instructor Note

Information for the instructor:

Examples of real-life scenarios where the planning process is used include - planning a trip; deciding on a major purchase; selecting a career; developing a financial plan; etc. People automatically track through a process to wrestle with various issues they are dealing with. Basically, they use the same steps that are in the NRCS planning process.